Against security

Mark Neocleous

We live, apparently, in insecure times. Sociology's current 'grand thinkers', for example, all highlight the issue of insecurity in their accounts of what is variously described as 'risk society', 'reflexive modernity' and 'postmodernity'. For Anthony Giddens, existential anxiety is generated by the collapse of ontological security in the late modern age, while Zygmunt Bauman suggests reversing Freud's argument in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Where Freud believed that civilization is a trade-off in which we achieve a certain security by sacrificing a certain degree of individual desire, it is now security which is sacrificed on the altar of ever-expanding individual freedom and liberty, producing endemic insecurity in its wake. Similarly, Ulrich Beck's influential thesis about 'risk society' depends heavily on the intrinsic connection drawn between risk and security. Not only the new global market, but what is taken to be its opposite – the idea that society can be planned and bureaucratically ordered from above – bring about insecurity on a wide scale. The hazards and problems produced by society 'exceed the bases of societal conceptions of security'. Thus the disappearance of lifelong jobs, the fact that we can no longer feel safe in what we eat or drink, the phenomenon of global warming, are all indicators of intensified levels of insecurity – both real and perceived.[1]

In an interesting parallel development, 'insecurity' has also come to play a major role in other disciplines. Introducing a recent collection of essays on the theme from within social policy, John Vail comments that 'insecurity has seeped into the fabric of our lives, and has become the template of our daily lived experience' – an idea which has also been used within political economy as a means of identifying and gauging the damaging effects of neo-liberal policy.[2] Within mainstream party politics Blair and his apparatchiks have in part justified their reformist zeal on the grounds that the Labour Party's core constituency is insecure, is feeling insecure, and must be made to feel secure again.[3] It appears that the 'age of reason', the 'age of science', the 'age of ideology' and all the other 'ages' we are said to have been through have now been replaced by the 'age of insecurity'.

This widespread claim comes at a time when equally widespread demands have been made for an expansion of the concept 'security'. Within international relations, for example, long the disciplinary home of 'security studies', arguments for a 'broad' concept of security extending beyond the traditional sectors of state and military are now common. Buzan, Wæver and Wilde's 'new framework' for security analysis, for example, 'attempts to widen the security agenda by claiming security status for issues and referent objects in the economic, environmental and societal sectors, as well as the military–political ones that define traditional security studies'. Indeed, the question of how the concept of security can be expanded, broadened or deepened has been the central debate within international relations theory in the 1990s.[4]

Influential political figures and institutions have also called for an expansion of the concept along similar lines. The Clinton administration in the early 1990s and Yeltsin in the late 1990s both called for 'a new understanding of the meaning and nature of national security', while the 1994 United Nations *Human Development Report* encouraged 'a new concept of human security' much broader than the older, narrow, definition focused on military and territorial issues. The *Report* invites us to move 'from nuclear security to human security', with the latter incorporating 'universal' concerns within several broad categories: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Similarly, the 1995 Commission on Global Governance proposed to broaden security 'from its traditional focus on the security of states' to the 'security of people and the planet', and in the same year the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, called for a 'conceptual breakthrough' going 'beyond armed territorial security' towards incorporating 'the security of people in their homes, jobs and communities'. Such arguments have dominated debates within the European Union during

the same period.[5] In many ways such comments consolidate tendencies which first emerged within the reports from international commissions in the 1980s, such as the Brandt Report (1980) on the wealth divide and the Brundtland Report (1987) on the environment. There had begun to develop what the Brandt Report describes as 'a new, more comprehensive understanding of "security" which would be less restricted to the purely military aspects'.[6] But they come at a time when insecurity is a central trope around which a whole host of social scientific researchers now base their work.

One of the advantages said to follow from expanding the security concept – to the individual, for example – and incorporating within it more 'human' concerns is that it helps focus on factors causing the generalized insecurity we now face. Claiming 'security status' for an issue is said to render it somehow more important and the need to deal with it more urgent than simply designating it a problem. The general outcome is a demand for 'more security'. One of Blair's leading wonks describes the key question in the 'new economy' as how to provide greater security; even more critical writers comment that 'at the heart of social democracy is the one economic feature specifically and unashamedly ruled out by the resurgent free market: security. Social democracy offers nothing if it does not offer security.'[7] And one can trace a clear line between the account of ontological security Giddens adapts from Husserl, Schutz, Goffman and Garfinkel and his presentation of the renewal of social democracy (the 'third way') as the basis of a new security.[8] It has even been suggested that the way to mobilize resources to deal with environmental degradation is to think of the environment not just as a security issue, but as the *ultimate* security issue.[9]

My concern in this article is as follows. There is no doubt that the demand to 'securitize' issues such as poverty and the environment comes from a genuine desire to do something about them. Such appeals to 'security' might have an instinctive appeal for the Left generally, concerned as it must be with these same issues. Buying into the assumption that the best way to have something done about these issues is to code them as questions of (in)security would appear to render objections to it – arguments *against security* – completely out of place. In fact, as I shall argue, this is the very problem. A more critical interrogation of the concept of security reveals a deeply problematic core. In this article I therefore aim to show, first, that 'security' is one of the essential categories in the self-understanding of bourgeois society; second, that the extensive 'securitizing' of such a wide range of issues now taking place is in fact a mechanism by which they become depoliticized; third, that this is a dangerous political game to play; and fourth that, by implication at least, the concept of security therefore has little place in critical theory.

I like your word 'security'

In the summer of 1945, a few days before Hiroshima received its abject lesson in US military power, Joseph E. Johnson, chief of International Security Affairs in the US State Department, commented that 'the abstract noun "security" has acquired a very concrete significance for us'. There had been, he thought, a significant change in the attitude towards security, which could be witnessed by the fact that it had become 'impossible to read a newspaper, or leaf through a magazine, or go to a dinner party' without being aware of the widespread discussions of the concept. A few months later in the autumn of that year a range of civilian and military heads of different parts of the US state testified before a Senate committee on the unification of the military services; whereas talks on the same issue eighteen months previously had barely used the term 'security', by the 1945 talks the term was on everyone's lips, in conjunction with the concept of the nation – 'national security'. The most forceful advocate of the concept, Navy Secretary Kames Forrestal, commented that 'national security' can only be secured with a broad and comprehensive front, adding that 'I am using the word "security" here consistently and continuously rather than "defense".' The idea appeared so new that one Senator commented, 'I like your words "national security".'[10]

The subsequent creations of the US National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency were a product of debates not about 'defence' (seen as too narrowly military) or even 'national interest' (seen as too weak a concept to form the basis of the exercise of state power) but about 'national security', embodied in the National Security Act of 1947. The implications of this development on the security concept were massive, not just because the global expansion of US power spawned and funded a generation of academics guided towards area studies, security studies and international relations more generally,[11] but because it appeared to place the state at the heart of the security question: it was the state which was to be secured and the state's security which was to be prioritized. To spell out the implications of this we need to take a historical detour.

The English word 'security' comes from the Latin *securitas*/*securus*. As an explicitly political concept *securitas* became prominent with the motto *securitas publica* – the safety or defence of empire – which built on the idea of necessity contained in the earlier idea of *raison d'état* and followed the assumptions embodied in the Peace of Westphalia. This was eventually transformed into the idea of security of state. Hence the Act of Security (1704), passed by the Scottish Parliament excluding Queen Anne's successor from the throne unless conditions of government were enacted securing the independence of the kingdom. The US development of the concept in 1945 may be seen as reviving and building on this tradition.

But 'security' has another, less obvious history. The Latin *securitas*/*securus* is derived from *sine cura*. *Sine* – meaning without, and *cura* – meaning troubling, solicitude, care, anxiety, attention, pains, grief and sorrow, guardianship, concern for persons and things. Together they give us *sine cura*: to be without care, free from cares and untroubled. *Securitas* is consequently defined as freedom from concern and danger, or, looked at from a slightly different angle, safety and security.[12] Lest this appear to provide the taken-for-granted 'positive' dimension to security, it is pertinent to note that the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives several examples of the way security was originally thought of as a *negative* state: 'our vayne glory, our viciousness, avarice, ydleness, security' (1564); 'they … were drowned in sinneful securitie' (1575). Here 'security is mortal's chiefest enemie', as Shakespeare has Hecate declare in *Macbeth* (III. v.32). In terms of its origins, then, security referred to individuals and was thought of as a careless, dangerous and in some cases sinful confidence.

Although by the eighteenth century the term had developed an intensely political meaning focused on the state, the second half of that century was a period of conceptual innovation for the concept of security, as important as that after the Second World War, but in an entirely different way. As with many concepts in this period – such as 'interest' and 'independence' –'security' underwent a semantic drift, shifting from politics to the marketplace and being re-focused on individuals, but this time as a positive term. That John Stuart Mill could declare that security is 'the most vital of all interests' and that 'security of person and property … are the first needs of society'[13] was one of the achievements of eighteenth-century liberalism, which treated security and liberty as more or less synonymous. Adam Smith, for example, refers to the 'liberty' and 'security' of individuals in the same breath, while Montesquieu claims that 'political liberty consists in security or, at least, in the opinion one has of one's security'. Bentham in his work of the 1780s suggests that 'a clear idea of liberty will lead us to regard it as a branch of security'.[14] Almost identical claims are made by a range of other writers in the liberal tradition: 'if population be connected with national wealth, liberty and personal security is the great foundation of both' (Ferguson); 'the design and end of government, viz. freedom and security' (Paine); 'the people, having no political liberty, would have no *security* for the continuance of the same laws' (Priestley); 'the loss of security' is 'the loss of liberty' (Paley); 'I would call security, if the expression does not seem too abrupt to be clear, the assurance of legal freedom' (Humboldt).[15] It was also found to be part of English constitutional law concerning individual liberty during this period.[16]

This identification of liberty with security should be understood as part of the articulation of a certain vision of security: 'liberty' designated a range of activities which occurred *outside* the political realm. In stark contrast to the state-centred approach embodied in the 1704 Act of Security and later revived by the American state, as security became the decisive criterion of liberty it came to imply the security of an undisturbed development of the life process of society as a whole. In other words, 'security' for liberalism came to refer to the liberty of secure possession; the liberty, that is, of private property. Government exists 'for the security of property', Smith tells us, presenting us with a triad of concepts which are run so closely together that they are almost conflated: 'liberty, security, property'. The same triad can be found in diverse places in the late eighteenth century, from Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1769) to the French declaration that the 'Rights of Man' are 'liberty, property, security'.[17] 'Security', in other words, became the cornerstone of the liberal bourgeois mind. Liberalism's radical recoding of the politics of order in the eighteenth century turned politics into a range of 'security measures' consistent with liberal principles. The concept of security thus became the ideological guarantee of the independent and self-interested pursuit of property within bourgeois society – the guarantee of the egoism of civil society. In doing so, security became *the supreme concept of bourgeois society.*[18]

Historically, then, it might appear that there are two broad approaches to security, a state-centric approach and an approach focused on the individual property owner. However, far from being opposites, these two

'strands' in the history of security are two sides of the same security coin. Thinking about what unites them reveals some of the problems with recent demands for more security and the attempt to securitize a range of social issues.

'Police, good order, and security'

Daniel Yergin has argued that the concept of national security 'postulates the interrelatedness of so many different political, economic, and military factors that developments halfway around the globe are seen to have automatic and direct impact on America's core interests'. As a consequence virtually every development in the world is perceived to be potentially crucial. The range of threats becomes limitless. 'The doctrine [national security] is characterized by expansiveness, a tendency to push the subjective boundaries of security outward to more and more areas, to encompass more and more geography and more and more problems'.[19] But it is pertinent to note that as an explicit anti-communist move, 'national security' was (and remains) concerned with *domestic* as much as foreign politics. The expansiveness of the doctrine also holds for perceived problems *internal* to states: anything which appears to threaten or even question the state regime is deemed a security threat. The doctrine of 'security' postulates the interrelatedness of so many different *internal* political, economic and social factors that virtually nothing is beyond its concern. Characterized by expansiveness concerning domestic issues and a tendency to push the subjective boundaries of security into more and more areas, 'national security' questions come to encompass more and more spheres of social life. This is apparent from the statutes themselves. The National Security Act made the US military a central participant in the American economy, requiring the National Security Council 'to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies relating to the national security'; the British Security Service Act of 1989 imposes on the security service the function of 'safeguard[ing] the economic well-being' of the nation; the US National Security Education Act of 1991 similarly makes direct links between national security and the 'economic well-being of the United States'. Such formulations obscure any distinction between the civil and military spheres and merge internal and external security. As much as 'national security' may be state-centric, then, it is in fact concerned with the *penetration* of civil society by the state (which, we shall see, takes us back to the concerns of liberalism). The best way to understand this penetration is as a *police project*. I shall develop this argument initially through a brief account of the work of two writers from very different intellectual backgrounds who developed a critique of the liberal conception of security in the early nineteenth century: G.W.F. Hegel and Patrick Colquhoun.

While Hegel is clearly heavily influenced by Smith's account of the political economy of the wealth of nations, his own understanding of the system of private property is that it needs to be administered politically: 'its adjustment also needs to be consciously regulated by an agency which stands above both sides'. One of the reasons for this is because the system of private property necessarily requires the existence of a class of poverty. This is a problem which 'agitates and torments modern societies' but to which there is no solution. The problem, however, is not poverty *per se*, but the fact that from the class of poverty a further, more dangerous 'class' can emerge, a 'rabble' without right, integrity and honour and thus in rebellion against property. This is a condition of profound insecurity which needs to be dealt with politically. Colquhoun's starting point is also the links between the insecurity of private property and the necessary existence of a class of poverty. Because poverty is 'that state and condition in society where the individual has no surplus labour in store, and, consequently, no property but what is derived from the constant exercise of industry in the various occupations of life' – that is, 'the state of every one who must labour for subsistence' – it is not poverty that is the problem but indigence, 'the state of any one who is destitute of the means of subsistence'. The insecurity of property therefore lies in the existence of a class of poverty, and in particular in the threat of this class becoming indigent (Hegel's 'rabble'). As with Hegel's account, this situation needs to be dealt with politically. For both writers the political solution resides in the police.

Since for Hegel security is a form of universality and a shape assumed by rationality, what the police provides for 'is the actualization and preservation of the universal … within the particularity of civil society'. The police does this 'as *an external order and arrangement* for the protection and security of the masses of particular ends and interests which have their subsistence in this universal'. Security needs to be guaranteed, and this is what the police provides. Similarly, Colquhoun comments that 'Security [of property] does not proceed from *severe punishments* [but is] to be attributed to a more correct and energetic system of Police'. The purpose of policing here is 'extending security to Commercial Property' as a whole: 'Wherever a proper Police attaches', Colquhoun states

categorically, 'good order and security will prevail.' Police exists for the 'well ordering and comfort of Civil Society', as Colquhoun puts it, or to 'to mediate between the individual and the universal' and 'care for the particular interest as a *common* interest', as Hegel remarks. As such it consists in the most general processes and institutions of public regulation, including street-lighting, bridge-building, the pricing of daily necessities, public health and, most significantly, the poor law.[20]

'Police' therefore consists in the ways in which the state fabricates social order and administers civil society in its search for security: security is *the* police project. As Marx puts it, with typical acumen: security *is* the concept of police.[21] It is under the banner of 'police' that security most often marches, and vice versa. This deepens the concept of security and draws together the two approaches outlined above. First, because in specifying the centrality of the policing of poverty to security, the question of class – as the key to making a market economy possible – becomes from the bourgeois point of view an essential part of the politics of security.[22] This undermines and transforms the liberal identification of security with individual liberty, turning it instead into a question of class dynamics. Second, it is clear that despite Hegel's and Colquhoun's attempts to locate police as part of the institutional framework of civil society, for both writers police is ultimately administered, and security ultimately achieved, by the organs of state power. The condition of security is thus not so much liberty and property, nor the state itself, but the penetration of civil society by the state via a range of police mechanisms. Far from being a spontaneous order of the kind found in liberal mythology, civil society is the security project *par excellence*. Police is a mechanism for *securing civil society*; a mechanism, that is, for securing class society.

That the security of civil society is fabricated by the state tells us something important about the concept of security. The *Oxford English Dictionary* organizes the entry for 'Security' under three sections, each highly revealing. The first two sections reveal that 'security' operates as both noun and verb. 'Security' refers to a condition (of being secure or protected), a state (of freedom from care or doubt), or a quality (of being securely fixed). But it also refers to a *means* of being secure and thus a *process* (of making safe, of securing something). The third meaning is financial – in the sense of 'security-bonds' – revealing that 'security', like 'capital', is a key term for both bourgeois economics and law. The fact that 'security' is both noun and verb reveals that as much as one might talk about the *condition* of security, one must also address the substantive and active *process of securing*. As Dillon puts it, security is not just a noun that names something, but a principle of formation that does things.[23] On this basis, police should be thought of not as

an institution or set of institutions but as a process, a principle of formation. This process is necessary because of the insecurity inherent in the system of private property. The market rests on the insecurity of economic actors, is founded on the insecurity of a class of poverty forever on the edge of falling into the state of indigence and becoming a rabble (or, as some would later come to argue, consciously opting for the money provided by the state rather than the wage provided by capital) and, finally, is rendered insecure by generating political enemies.

All security is defined in relation to insecurity. Not only must any appeal to security involve a specification of the fear which engenders it (as in Hobbes), but this fear (insecurity) demands the counter-measures (security) to neutralize, eliminate or constrain the person, group, object or condition which engenders fear. Securing is therefore what is done to a condition that is insecure. It is only because it is shaped by insecurity that security can secure. This is what James Der Derian describes as the *paradox of security*: in security we find insecurity. Any argument for security contains a strong trace of insecurity within it: 'originating in the contingency of life and the certainty of mortality, the history of security reads as a denial, a resentment, and finally a transcendence of this paradox. In brief, the history is one of individuals seeking an impossible security from the most radical "other" of life, the terror of death.'[24] One can apply this argument to civil society and the state in general: the terror of death can be thought of as a terror of *social* death – the death of civil society itself. The history of security is a history of the state seeking an impossible security from the terror of the death of civil society and thus the end of private property. To make the point in more explicit class terms: it is because civil society generates its own enemies that private property is inherently insecure. The economic inactivity of the working class is the heart of the insecurity of the system; the resistance of this class to the social domination of private property is its next step; and the political mobilization of the class its highest form. Thus the history of police as a security project is a history of private property's fear of its most radical 'other' (communism). The police project involves nothing less than securing the social system – the fabrication of *social security* – the aim of which is less the security of the individual citizen, assured of a safety net in place to help him or her in times of need, and more the security of the existing forms of social domination.[25] It is for this reason that the idea of security is one of the principal ideological mechanisms in operation within bourgeois society.

Securitization as depoliticization

One of the features of the recent attempts to 'achieve security' and to expand the concept accordingly is that it speaks to the common-sense assumption that security is something we all naturally seek. The texts in question are replete with comments on the 'profound and unquenchable desire for security', on how 'insecurity is a timeless concern that is always with us', or how 'concerns about human security are as old as human history', or how the need for security is embodied in the 'primal relation' as 'a fundamental human emotion'.[26] On this assumption is based the further argument that the things to be secured are universal concerns – the environment, biotechnology, economic life, and so on – about which there can be no debate. 'Environmental security', for example, is said to concern 'the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend'. Its ultimate referent is therefore '*the risk of losing achieved levels of civilization* – a return to forms of societal barbarism'.[27] Presenting us with the option 'security or barbarism?' invites us to accept the identification of security with, crudely speaking, 'the good things in life' – that is, virtually everything to which we think a rational society ought to aspire.[28] As a political technique, securitizing an issue simultaneously homogenizes and mobilizes social and political forces by highlighting an existential threat in the form of an enemy, justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure. In the process the disruption of normal liberal politics under the exercise of emergency powers is legitimized. But this is a dangerous game to play, for it encourages the blurring of the dividing line between 'normal' and 'exceptional' or emergency powers.[29] Key social and political aspirations become wrapped in the security blanket and incorporated into the security agenda.

The corollary of the focus on (in)security is the perpetual mystification of the processes of social power. Whatever one feels about treating the environment, economic change, new forms of migration, developments in biotechnology and so on, as existential threats, the logically and politically prior point to be made is that these are socially manufactured problems. To say this is not to say that they are unimportant. It is to say that they need to be understood in the context of the historical intensification of capital accumulation, an increased desire on the part of national governments to facilitate the search for profit on the part of corporate power, and the decline of effective political opposition. To securitize them, or to view them

through the prism of security, represents a profound and disturbing failure of political awareness.[30] Far from being unimportant, the 'insecurities' in fact raise the central questions of social and political power; the central questions, that is, of critical theory. And this is the point: in the process of being *securitized* these questions are being *depoliticized*.

Transforming social issues into questions of security plays into the hands of corporate power by turning us into consumers of the products of finance capital. 'Security' becomes a positional good defined by income and access to private protective services, a prestige symbol concerned less with dealing with the social causes of insecurity and more with one's own private safety and personal insulation from 'unsavoury' social elements. This revives the liberal assumptions about individual autonomy and private property in the guise of new forms of neo-liberal subjectivity. Much of the contemporary sociological discourse on security, for example, assumes that its achievement can be found in a more productive relation to the self as a condition for liberty, requiring active participation in the schemes and plans put forward by those institutions of corporate finance which have come to replace the more traditional mechanisms of 'social security' (the 'third way'). Thus 'insecurity' comes to be used as a strategy for encouraging investment in private healthcare schemes and pensions, or for consuming the commodities which are said to make us more secure. This denies that security is a political relation and makes it the responsibility of the private individual pursuing their self-interest, consolidating its position as one of the greatest commodities of our time.

Far from encouraging political action, the outcome has been to help realize a fortress mentality, either forcing us further into our privatized (but secure) universes or transforming the public sphere through the intensification of surveillance programmes.[31] There is an integral link between security and knowledge, as Nietzsche noted ('is the jubilation of those who attain knowledge not the jubilation over the restoration of a sense of security?'), but the point needs to be made politically. Security functions as knowledge, relies on knowledge, produces knowledge, and uses its claim to knowledge as licence to render all aspects of life transparent to the state. Security therefore requires that civil society be calculable and knowable, a project of knowledge and calculation in the services of state power. Hannah Arendt's comment that under totalitarian rule 'the police dreams that one look at the gigantic map on the office wall should suffice at any given moment to establish who is related to whom and in what degree of intimacy' is the police dream in a liberal democracy too. It is no more than the dream of state power and its search for security.[32]

Moreover, labelling an issue a security problem enables the state to curb criticism, shut off debate, undermine civil liberties and, if necessary, destroy those individuals and groups which offer political opposition to the system that produces the insecurity in the first place – groups, that is, which try to politicize rather than securitize the issues. For if, say, environmental questions are security questions, then it is perfectly reasonable for the security services to place environmental groups under surveillance. Thus, as a major contribution to making us more secure, the Prevention of Terrorism bill currently being considered by the British parliament will treat environmental groups as terrorist organizations. The liberal-Left response to this argument is that the demand for 'more security' has to be couched in terms of the rule of law and basic rights. But this reveals itself to be a politically naive misunderstanding of ruling-class inventiveness with the concept of security, not least because the ruling class has been most sensitive to the fact that property and the state are the two sides of the security coin. For example, Master of the Rolls Lord Donaldson has argued that,

> although they give rise to tensions at the interface, 'national security' and 'civil liberties' are on the same side. In accepting, as we must, that to some extent the needs of national security must displace civil liberties, albeit to the least possible extent, it is not irrelevant to remember that the maintenance of national security underpins and is the foundation of all our civil liberties.[33]

The beauty of such a formulation is in the way that it synthesizes the classical liberal principle of individual rights with one of the most trenchant twentieth-century formulations of authoritarian rule.

The demand for security, then, lends itself to the greater exercise of state power and private property. As part of the coinage of power 'security' is a fundamental ideological tool of the system of internal political repression and social domination, and securitization little more than a technique for grounding and legitimating the political regime, equating the political status quo with the desirable order and giving the state virtually *carte blanche* powers to protect it.[34] In a situation where the obvious existence of widespread insecurity would appear to make the call for more security unchallengeable, the Left needs to remember that security is the supreme concept of bourgeois society. Far from generating new ways of

thinking about social and political questions, the cry of 'insecurity' has induced an intellectual paralysis and failure of political awareness. To demand 'more security' is to add our signatures to the operating manual of class rule and blind us to the possibility of building real alternatives to existing forms of the state and private property. Securitizing questions of social and political power has the debilitating effect of allowing the state to subsume genuinely political action concerning the issues in question, consolidating the power of the existing forms of social domination, and justifying the short-circuiting of even the most minimal liberal democratic procedures. Rather than securitizing issues, then, we should be looking for ways to politicize them in non-security ways. It is worth remembering that one meaning of 'secure' is 'unable to escape': we should avoid thinking about state power and private property through categories which may render us unable to escape them.

Notes

1. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 131; Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 35–69; Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 2–3, 124; Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 116–18; Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 16–24; Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter, Sage, London, 1992, pp. 76, 98, 153, 197, 220, 227; Ulrich Beck, *Ecological Enlightenment: Essays on the Politics of the Risk Society*, trans. Mark Ritter, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1995, p. 126; Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 6, 38, 56, 74; Jane Franklin, ed., *The Politics of Risk Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 2, 77, 85, 90–95, 121, 126; Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 80, 116–17, 141.
2. John Vail, 'Insecure Times: Conceptualising Insecurity and Security', in John Vail, Jane Wheelock and Michael Hill, eds, *Insecure Times: Living with Insecurity in Contemporary Society*, Routledge, London, 1999; Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, *The Age of Insecurity*, Verso, London, 1998.
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30. For similar claims in the context of the environment and migration respectively, see Daniel Deudney, 'The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security', *Millennium*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1990, pp. 461–76; and Jef Huysmans, 'The Question of the Limit: Desecuritisation and the Aesthetics of Horror in Political Realism', *Millennium*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1998, pp. 569–89.
31. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, Vintage, London, 1992, pp. 223–63. The use of 'security cameras' in public spaces is a good example of the ways in which security issues lend themselves to corporate and state power. In Britain the evidence for how successful security cameras are in making us more secure is mixed. The only Home Office review to date found that CCTV had little impact on the crimes that most concern the public, and that in the areas examined robbery and theft continued to rise. Nonetheless the argument that such surveillance renders us more secure continues to be made, most notably by the corporate powers which have an economic interest in the sale of such technology and by the state which has a political interest in surveillance – indeed, the Home Office press release launching the report made no mention of any negative findings, instead choosing to repeat the platitudes about CCTV reducing crime and therefore the need for such surveillance. For a discussion of this and related research, see Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong, *The Maximum Surveillance Society: The Rise of CCTV*, Berg, Oxford, 1999, pp. 63–7.
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33. *R.* v. *Secretary of State for the Home Secretary, ex parte Cheblak* [1991], *All England Law Reports*, 1991, vol. 2, p. 334, writing about the internment of Iraqis and Palestinians during the Gulf War.
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